

THE STRATEGY OF TRANSLATING PUN IN ENGLISH – INDONESIAN SUBTITLE OF AUSTIN POWERS: *GOLDMEMBER*

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Abstract: *This paper concerns about the translation of pun in comedy movie's subtitle. The data is taken from a comedy movie Austin Powers: Goldmember. There are three problems that are being discussed in this paper. The first problem is the effect of different types of pun to translatability. Second, the strategies in translating different types of pun are discussed. The last is the assessment of translation using register analysis in evaluating the extent of loss and gain occurred in the translation process.*

Key words: *pun, translatability, translation strategy, register theory*

INTRODUCTION

Pun is found in everyday life. As what Gottlieb said, *pun* (wordplay) can be found frequently in „real English’ (cited in Delabatista 1997). However, many people thought that *pun* is untranslatable because of its linguistic aspects. It is known that every language has different linguistic aspects. If we take the word *boreocracy* as an example, which plays on words *bureaucracy* and *bore* that was used by Mary Daly in her book *Gyn/Ecology* in 1978 (von Flotow 1997), it is very difficult to find the equivalence of

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that word in other languages, particularly Indonesian. Translating this *pun* into another *pun* in other languages is also difficult since other languages do not have the same phonemic structure with English. Joseph Addison (cited in Delabatista 1997) even believed that pun is unique compared to other forms of humor and speech because of its untranslatability.

However, Newmark (1988) stated that any types of speech in a language can be translated into another language. He said that a translator must not take the easy way by saying that something cannot be translated. His argument is supported by Davis (cited in Delabatista 1997) who argued that “*pun* refers not to individual words or ideas, but to the systemic operation of a particular language, it comprises the self-referential signature of that language which may at first seem untranslatable”. Davis was trying to say that *pun* is not consisted of only ambiguous words, but also a system in a language that has its own characters. These unique characters of a language are the reasons why *pun* appears untranslatable. Hence, we can conclude that *pun* can be translated, because there are many aspects that should be considered in a language, such as the contexts, culture, linguistics features, etc.

DEFINITION OF PUN

Pun, or as it is also known as wordplay, is the clever or humorous use of expression that has more than one meaning, or of words that have different meanings but sound the same (Oxford 1995). According to Alexieva (cited in Delabatista 1997), *pun* is “being based somehow on a confrontation or clash of two meanings”. The funny side of *pun* is in the ambiguity of the words’ meaning.

Gottlieb (cited in Delabatista 1997) mentioned that there are two types of wordplay, namely vertical wordplay and horizontal

wordplay. The meaning of vertical wordplay can be understood by the viewers at once, whereas the meaning of horizontal wordplay can be revealed through repetition in a context portraying the other „meaning’. Whereas, ausmann (cited in Delabatista 1997) classify *pun* (wordplay) into the following typology:

Types of wordplay	Defining characteristics	Central features at play	Example
Lexical homonymy	Two expressions pronounced and spelt in the same way	Single-word ambiguity	Our social studies teacher says that her globe means the <u>world</u> to her. (Taken from: http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/puns.htm)
Collocational homonymy	Two expressions pronounced and spelt in the same way	Word-in-context ambiguity	I used to be twins. My mother has a picture of me when I was <u>two</u> . (Taken from: http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/puns.htm)
Phrasal homonymy	Two expressions pronounced and spelt in the same way	Clause ambiguity	I recently spent money on detergent to unclog my kitchen sink. It was <u>money down the drain</u> . (Taken from: http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/puns.htm)
Homophony	Two	Phonemic	Sir Lancelot once

	expressions pronounced in the same way	ambiguity	had a very bad dream about his horse. It was a <u>knight mare</u> . (Taken from: http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/puns.htm)
Homography	Two expressions spelt in the same way	Graphemic ambiguity	You can tune a guitar, but you can't <u>tuna</u> fish. Unless of course, you play <u>bass</u> . (Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pun)
Paronymy	Two expressions pronounced and spelt in nearly the same way	Phonemic or graphemic ambiguity	I'd love to have some chocolate <u>ass cream</u> . (Taken from: Austin Powers)

Table 1:
Hausmann's Typology

TRANSLATING *PUN* IN MOVIE SUBTITLE

Unlike translating *pun* (wordplay) in written discourse, translating *pun* (wordplay) in the subtitle can be helped by several non-verbal elements, such as intonation in the dialogue, non-verbal visual information that accompany the dialogue, and written text on the screen e.g. displays (headings, street signs, etc.) or captions (titles, verbal graphics, etc.). Therefore, a theory that concerns linguistic features as well as context is required in analyzing the translation of *pun* to help the translator translating the *pun*.

“Register theory describes the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way

language is used” (Eggins 2004:9). Therefore, register theory would help in explaining the context in which the *pun* is uttered so that people could grasp the humor. Moreover, understanding register could help the translator in translating *pun* by applying House’s theory of translation quality assessment which compares the register of SL text with the register of TL text. Register is comprised by mode, tenor, and field, which will be explained more thoroughly in the following.

A. Mode

Mode is 'the role language is playing in the interaction' (Eggins 2004:98). There are two types of distance in the interaction related with language and situation:

1. Spatial/interpersonal distance. Spatial and interpersonal distance concerns the space between interactants and also immediate feedback between the interactants.
2. Experiential distance. „Experiential distance ranges situations according to the distance between language and social process occurring’ (Eggins 2004: 91). Language as action is being used to accompany social processes; the example is performative utterances, like thanking, making promises, apologizing, etc., whereas language as reflection is being used to constitute social happenings such as telling a story, giving opinion, and recounting experience.

Mode is realized through the theme of the discourse. These textual patterns are patterns of foregrounding and continuity in the organization of the clause (Eggins 2004:110). Mode is indicated by the use of language markers of co-presence such as “here you

go...” The language markers would show whether the mode of the discourse is spoken or written.

B. Tenor

According to Eggins (2004:99), tenor is 'the social role relationships played by the interactants'. As suggested by Cate Poynton (cited in Eggins 2004:99), tenor can be divided into three dimensions:

1. Power. The power continuum concerns the power role of the interactants, whether it is equal or unequal, e.g. students-teacher has unequal role and friends has equal role.
2. Contact. Contact continuum defines the situations in terms of whether the interactants make frequent or infrequent contact.
3. Affective involvement. Affective involvement schematizes situations where the interactants ranges from emotionally involved and committed or not at all.

Tenor is realized through patterns that is called mood. Mood refers to variables such as types of clause structure, degree of certainty or obligation expressed, the use of tags, vocatives, or attitudinal words, expressions of intensification and politeness markers. Tenor divides situation into formal and informal situations.

C. Field

Field can be defined as situational variables that are related to the activity in which one is engaged. It is realized through some parts of the grammatical system, namely patterns of processes (verbs), participants (nouns), and circumstances (prepositional phrases). Field divides situations into technical situation and

everyday situation. The indication of technical situation and everyday situation can be seen from its choice of words.

STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING *PUN*

There are some strategies that can be used in translating *pun*. These translation strategies can be applied for different types of *pun*. A specific strategy might be the best to use in translating a particular type of *pun*, resulting in equivalent translation. These strategies of translating *pun* were proposed by Delabatista (cited in Spanakaki 2007):

1. *PUN* = *PUN*

This translation strategy renders the *pun* in the source language subtitle into a *pun* in the target language. This strategy can be applied for closely related languages, such as English and Danish, which are culturally similar. Danish humor resembles English humor. That is why it is possible to translate an English *pun* into a Danish *pun*. However, for languages that are not closely related, e.g. English and Indonesian, it will be a little difficult to apply this strategy for translating *pun*. It is because both languages have very different cultures and linguistics aspects.

2. *PUN* = NON *PUN*

If the *pun* can not be translated into another *pun* in the target language, then it can be translated into a non-*punning* phrase, which maintains the senses of the source language *pun*, and a non-*punning* phrase that only portrays a part of the senses of the source language *pun*.

3. *PUN* = RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICES

Pun can be translated into other rhetorical devices such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony, paradox, assonance, etc. the purpose is that another rhetorical device in the target language can help to transfer the meaning and sense of the *pun* in the source language.

4. *PUN* = ZERO

This strategy omits *pun* in source language subtitle from the target language subtitle completely. This strategy must be applied when there is no equivalence in the target language and the translator considers that the *pun* is not important or s/he expects the audience to get the humor from the movie scene.

5. *PUN* SL → *PUN* TL

This strategy transfers the source language *pun* into target language *pun*. In other words, the *pun* is not translated. It is adopted as another *pun* in the target language.

6. NON *PUN* = NEW *PUN*

The translator might add another *pun* in the target language in translating phrase, clause, or sentence in the source language, as a compensation for the loss occurring elsewhere. It is expected that the new *pun* would replace the source language *pun* that is not translated before.

7. ZERO = *PUN*

This strategy does not translate a source language text, instead the translator adds a new material which contains *pun* as compensation for the previous loss.

8. EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES

This editorial techniques mean that the translator add explanatory note or endnote, comments in translator's forewords, „anthological' presentation of different, complementary solutions etc.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

There were 30 *puns* found in the movie subtitle of “Austin Powers in Goldmember”. Those thirty *puns* were then grouped based on its typology and the strategy used in translating it. The percentage of *puns* based on its typology and translation strategies can be seen as follows:

Types of Wordplay	Translation Strategies	Amount	Total
Lexical Homonymy	<i>Pun = Pun</i>	2 (6.67%)	6 (20%)
	<i>Pun = Non Pun</i>	3 (10%)	
	Editorial Techniques	1 (3.33%)	
Collocational Homonymy	<i>Pun = Pun</i>	2 (6.67%)	2 (6.67%)
Phrasal Homonymy	<i>Pun = Pun</i>	3 (10%)	5 (16.67%)
	<i>Pun = Non Pun</i>	2 (6.67%)	
Homophony	<i>Pun = Non Pun</i>	2 (6.67%)	4 (13.33%)
	<i>Pun = Zero</i>	1 (3.33%)	
	Editorial Techniques	1 (3.33%)	
Paronymy	<i>Pun</i> SL → <i>Pun</i> TL	6 (20%)	13 (43.33%)
	<i>Pun = Non Pun</i>	5 (16.67%)	
	<i>Pun = Zero</i>	2 (6.67%)	
Homography	-	-	-
TOTAL PUN			30

Table 2:
Puns based on typology

From this analysis, it can be perceived that one type of *pun*, that is homonymy, can be translated into another *pun* in the TL. Paronymy *pun* mostly rendered as a *pun* in the TL without being translated, commonly the *pun* that has a function as proper names. Moreover, it is clear that homophony *pun* cannot be translated into a *pun* in TL because of its linguistic features.

Other strategies that commonly used in translating *pun* in English are literal translation which resulted in a non *pun* phrase of the TL subtitle, the omitting of SL *pun* in the translation process, and the use of editorial techniques in the TL subtitle.

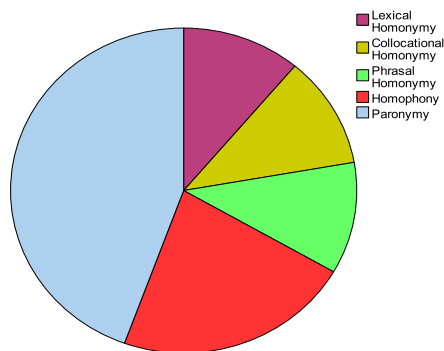


Figure 1:
The Frequency of Puns in “Austin Powers: Goldmember”

From this pie chart, we can see that paronymy is the type of *pun* that occurs the most in the movie subtitle *Austin Powers: Goldmember*. However, if the lexical, collocational, and phrasal homonymy were added together, the number is even with paronymy *pun*. The least *pun* found in the data is homophony. An example of homography *pun* cannot be found in this movie subtitle. Gottlieb, in his research findings of *pun* translation in *Carrot's Commercial Breakdown*, also found out that homonymy is the type of *pun* that occur the most, followed by paronymy.

Homonymy is commonly found, probably because every word has tendency to have more than one meaning, especially when it is being used in different contexts. Paronymy is frequently used in everyday life also because it is a mixed use of words that have almost the same pronunciation or spelling. Any word can be transformed into a *pun*. To create humor, people could use a word that is being mixed with another word which is resulted in ambiguity and in the creation of a slightly different meaning for that word, for example the mix of word “psychedelic” and “shag” into “shagadelic”. On the other hand, the use of homophony and

homography *pun* is less found in the data, probably due to the limited number of homophones or homograph existed in a language.

To create homophony and homography *pun*, one must know different homophones and homographs in a language and is able to put it in such context so that both meanings of the homophones or homographs could be exposed to create ambiguity. In other words, it is more difficult to create homophony and homography *pun* compared with homonymy and paronymy *pun*.

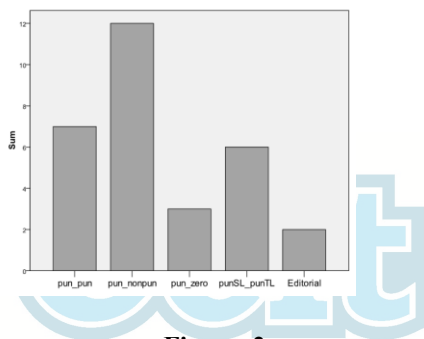


Figure. 2:
Translation strategy used in translating puns

From the bar graph above, it can be seen that the translation strategies used most in translating *pun* was by translating *pun* into non *pun*. The reason of this might be because the translator wanted to, at least, maintain the meaning, although the humor is lost. It is better to have the meaning maintained and loss the humor rather than to omit the *pun* completely, which will result in a complete loss. On the other hand, editorial technique was the least technique used in translating *pun* in movie subtitle due to the time and space constraints faced by translator in subtitling. If a translator uses editorial technique, it means s/he has to consider the length of the notes, because it can affect the appearance of the subtitle. Because of these many considerations, the use of editorial note in translating

subtitle is limited. There are 8 strategies in translating *pun*. However, only five strategies were applied in translating *pun* in movie subtitle of *Austin Powers: Goldmember*. 'Compensatory language play' (Schröter, 2005:145), such as *pun* = related rhetorical devices, non *pun* = *pun*, and zero = *pun*, were not applied. According to Schröter (2005:145), these strategies are difficult to be applied due to "the interplay between picture and soundtrack, and the presence of the original dialogue in subtitled versions". It is difficult to add a *pun* in the target language, particularly *pun* that can be connected with the dialogue and the plot of the story. The strategy of adopting the SL *pun* as the TL *pun* is mostly used in translating paronymy *puns* that have a function as proper names. Schröter (2005:146) mentioned some good reasons for not translating proper names. "If a story is set in the real world, unchanged names preserve some of the cultural flavor of the original version and fit the setting better." It is true that we would never translate our own name when we go to other countries. Therefore, proper names are best not to be translated.

The translation of *pun* in SL into a *pun* in TL could be employed in translating homonymy *pun*. Below are the graph of frequency of homonymy *puns* which are translated using *Pun* = *Pun* strategy.

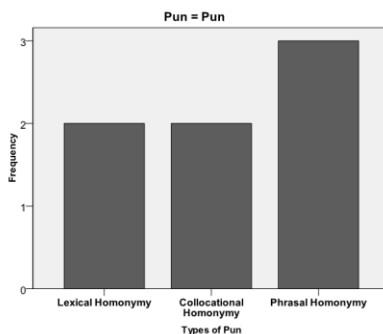


Figure 3:
Pun = Pun Strategy

From this graph, we can see that only homonymy *puns* can be translated into a *pun* in TL. From six lexical homonymy *puns*, two were translated into a *pun* in TL. The other four, could not be translated into another *pun* because the lexical meanings of the word might be very different from one another. Therefore, the translator chose to translate them into non-*pun* by using one of the word's meanings. Whereas all the collocational homonymy *pun* were translated into *pun* in TL. The reason is that the ambiguity of collocational homonymy *pun* depends on the context of situation. Consequently, the ambiguity and humor can still be maintained by translating it literally. While three out of five phrasal homonymy *pun* were translated using *Pun = Pun* strategy. It is possible because the context of situation, the non-verbal elements, like the background and the setting, really helped in translating the SL *pun* into TL *pun*. Other *puns*, such as paronymy and homophony, that employs linguistic features are difficult to be translated into TL *pun* because, unlike homonymy *puns*, the ambiguity of the word and the humor does not depend on the context of situation.

EXAMPLES OF DATA ANALYSIS

A. Phrasal Homonymy *Pun* translated into *Pun* in the Target Language Subtitle

Female Teacher : “Don’t forget Mr. Powers, later you have a brief oral exam.”

(Jangan lupa nanti ada ujian oral singkat.)

Austin : “Well I hope it’s mostly oral and not too brief, baby. You know brief and oral exam...”

(Kuharap sebagian besar oral dan tidak terlalu singkat.)

1. Register analysis

a. Field:

This scene was taken in a dormitory room. The language used is related to educational field, as the setting is in a school. There was educational term mentioned in this conversation, such as oral exam. However, the pictures shown the woman fixing her cloth and the man (Austin) is still naked in the bed. Based on this situation, it can be seen that an affair was happening between the teacher and the student. Because the field of this discourse is in school and there was an affair happening between the interactants, the language being used is the formal language that occurs in everyday situation.

b. Tenor:

- 1) Power. The power between the interactants is unequal, because the interactants are teacher and student, as illustrated by the sentence “Don’t forget Mr. Powers, later you have a brief oral exam”. The formality is marked by the use of formal vocative by one of the interactants, e.g. “Mr. Powers”. However, the power between the interactants was also influenced by their relationship. The affair was marked by vocative „baby’ said by Austin. They were teacher and student, who were also lovers.
- 2) Contact: In this scene, it was shown that the interactants had just engaged in sexual intercourse. They had frequent physical contact during the sexual intercourse, and even when the woman was going to leave the room, they still kept eye contact while they were talking.
- 3) Affective involvement. Other than having a formal relationship as teacher and student, the interactants were also emotionally involved because they were having an

affair. Their affective involvement is indicated by the vocatives „baby’.

c. Mode:

- 1) Spatial/interpersonal distance. The interactants were in the same room, therefore they were talking face to face, although the space between them was quite large as the woman was standing near the door and the man was still in bed. They had visual and aural contact during the conversation which resulted in immediate feedback.
- 2) Experiential distance. From the sentence “Don’t forget Mr. Powers, later you have a brief oral exam”, it can be deduced that the language is used as verbal action, that is as a reminder of an action that is going to happen in the future.

2. Translation analysis

No. Subtitle	English	Indonesian	Type of Pun	Translation Strategies
132	Don’t forget Mr. Powers, later you have a brief oral exam .	<i>Jangan lupa nanti ada ujian oral singkat.</i>	Phrasal homonymy	<i>Pun = Pun</i>
133	Well I hope it’s mostly oral and not too brief, baby. You know brief and oral exam...	<i>Kuharap sebagian besar oral dan tidak terlalu singkat.</i>	Phrasal homonymy	<i>Pun = Pun</i>

Table 3:
Register analysis

From the register analysis done above, we know that the interactants' relationship were teacher-student who were having an affair. From her accent, it was clear that the female teacher is French and she might teach French subject in that school. Her expression of „a brief oral exam' could mean speaking test for the subject that she taught. However, the phrase become ambiguous because of the situation in which they were in (as explained in the register analysis). Moreover, as Austin stated “Well I hope it's mostly oral and not too brief, baby.” the ambiguity revealed. From Austin's facial expression and the state he was in (naked in bed), the phrase could also mean that they were going to have oral sex instead of oral examination. Moreover, Austin emphasized his statement by saying “You know, brief and oral exam.” This sentence stressed the double meaning of the phrase. This type of *pun* can be classified into horizontal *pun*.

The strategy used in translating this phrasal homonymy *pun* is *pun* to *pun* translation. However, there were some important points that are not being translated into the Indonesian Subtitle. First, the vocatives „Mr. Powers' and „baby' were deleted. This particular point is important in translation to show the relationship between the interactants, so that the audience could get the humor. However, in Indonesia, teachers usually address their students by their name only. Therefore, the word „Mr. Powers' does not have to be translated into *Tuan Powers* because a teacher would never call his/her student *tuan*. „Powers' only would be sufficient in the translation to show the relationship between teacher and student. Second, the word „exam' is translated into *ujian*. Another equivalent for „exam' is *tes*. *Tes* is better than *ujian* in this context because it means could mean exam or trial. As the word „exam' has ambiguous meaning, so it will be better to use the equivalence that also has double meaning. *Tes* makes more sense to be used in talking about sexual intercourse rather than *ujian*. Third, the translator omitted the next sentence completely. It is important to

be translated because it emphasizes the double meaning that the *pun* intended. Suggested translation is given as follows:

SL	TL	Suggested Translation
Don't forget Mr. Powers, later you have a brief oral exam.	<i>Jangan lupa nanti ada ujian oral singkat.</i>	<i>Jangan lupa <u>Powers</u>, nanti ada <u>tes</u> oral singkat.</i>
Well I hope it's mostly oral and not too brief, baby.	<i>Kuharap sebagian besar oral dan tidak terlalu singkat.</i>	<i>Kuharap sebagian besar oral dan tidak terlalu singkat, <u>sayang</u>.</i>
You know brief and oral exam...	-	<i><u>Kau tahulah, tes oral yang singkat.</u></i>

Table 4:
Suggested translation

CONCLUSION

A more idiomatic translation could be made by comparing the register of both SL and TL text. From the analysis of register and strategy in translating *pun* found in English and Indonesian movie subtitle of “Austin Powers: Goldmember”, it can be concluded that different types of *pun* have different level of translatability. The extent of loss and gain during the translation process of *pun* varies. When the *pun* can be translated into another *pun* in the target language, the meaning and humor can be rendered, therefore there is no loss in the process. When the *pun* is translated into non *pun* phrase in the target language, the meaning is maintained but the humor is lost. If the *pun* is translated with the help of editorial technique, the meaning is rendered but it depends on the viewers to grasp the humor. When the SL *pun* is adopted to TL *pun*, the humor and the meaning of *pun* can only be revealed if the viewers understand English. Therefore, the loss and gain really depends on the viewers. If the strategy used in translating *pun* is to omit the

pun, the meaning and humor intended by the *pun* will be lost completely.

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